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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000585

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI ACCUSES FRENCH OF TRYING TO DESTABILIZE THE COUNTRY

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In reaction to an April 16 French program broadcast on TF1 and Radio France International regarding new developments in the Borrel case, the Djiboutian government issued a statement 17 April accusing France of attempting to destabilize the government of Djibouti. The statement also cited "the American presence" as explaining France's "obstinate will to harm the image of Djibouti and its President." Recent declassification of French foreign intelligence agency documents relating to the 1995 death of Judge Bernard Borrel in Djibouti have brought back to the surface controversy over whether President Ismail Omar Guelleh, then Head of National Security, was involved in the judge's death. END SUMMARY.

#### GOVERNMENT OF DJIBOUTI'S STATEMENT

2. (SBU) The office of the Presidency of the Government of Djibouti (GODJ) issued April 17 an official press release via the Agence Djiboutienne d'Information (ADI - Djiboutian Information Agency) accusing France of "pursuing a single and unique objective: the destabilization of a country." The statement expressed the Presidency's extreme dissatisfaction at the treatment of the Borrel affair in the French media and considered the piece an attack on the image of the Djiboutian government and its President. The statement called the American presence in Djibouti an explanation for the French government's "obstinate will to harm the image of Djibouti and its President." The statement's conclusion asserted the Djiboutian government's intent to forge its own destiny.

3. (U) Following is a translation of the statement issued by the Djiboutian Government:  
"Yesterday, observers experienced some difficulty understanding the underlying motives and political meaning behind the media attack on the Borrel affair and accusations directed at the Republic of Djibouti and its President. It appears today that the French state pursues a single and unique objective: the destabilization of a country.

In fact, how else can one explain that from one note written by an agent of the DGSE immediately following the decision to declassify documents relating to the death of Judge Bernard Borrel, one hastily concludes that it was a political assassination.

Convinced that it would be useful for all parties to put a definitive end to the controversy, Djibouti took the initiative 27 August 2003 to request that French authorities lift the secrecy from this affair. A favorable response came on 10 March 2004. But it was without planning on the manipulation and the will of the French government to cause harm. This last, specialist in late recoveries, and little inclined to research the truth, engages once more in a media campaign, putting to work its agents of propaganda, RFI and TF1, who repeat hypnotically a single message: the assassination of Judge Borrel is no longer a doubt; It was President Guelleh and his entourage who were responsible for this. It is in this manner that a poorly advised series, incoherent enough and which carries indelible traces of State manipulation, refers to the attacks at the Cafe de Paris in 1990. One must remember that on the date Judge Borrel was assigned to Djibouti, the Cafe de Paris affair had already been tried, the perpetrators convicted and the case closed.

It is permissible to suppose that if President Ismail Omar Guelleh bothers France, it is because he always poses himself as a leader who defends the promotion of the national interest. He is the one who knew how to foil the strategy to divide the country, conceived and developed by France. A strategy which unfortunately saw relative success in other areas of Africa, leading to a fate of inexpressible suffering and unconscionable misery.

To those who know how to decipher the French political speech, the American presence in Djibouti explains the obstinate will to harm the image of Djibouti and its President.

But it is in the exercise of its legitimate right to sovereignty that Djibouti establishes friendships and cooperation with the countries with whom it shares common values!

Djibouti is determined to forge its own destiny. The Djiboutian people, conscious of the stakes, support the President and his government in the pursuit of development objectives."

End Translated Text.

#### BACKGROUND ON THE BORREL CASE

14. (SBU) The French judge Bernard Borrel, assigned to Djibouti in the early 1990's, was found burned at the bottom of a ravine on October 19, 1995. The Djiboutian investigation of Borrel's death led to a conclusion of suicide, though no autopsy was done in Djibouti and the X-rays taken were not made available to French investigators. Borrel's body was repatriated and buried in France, November 1995. At that time, Borrel's wife initiated a request for an autopsy and investigation in the Court of Toulouse on the cause of Borrel's death. The autopsy was done in February 1996, but results were not released for a full year. The autopsy revealed Borrel had no soot in his lungs and therefore, did not die from burning.

15. (SBU) After the autopsy, Elisabeth Borrel found documents among her husbands effects, relating to the Cafe de Paris attack in Djibouti in 1990. The documents mentioned a request for audits of the case. Borrel had acted as the coordinator between the Djiboutian judge and the French judge in charge of the case, where Ismail Omar Guelleh is believed to be involved. November 1997, French judges Roger le Loire and Marie-Paule Morrachini were nominated to look into the case. In January 2000, their investigation turned up testimony from a witness who affirmed that judge Borrel was assassinated. Mohamed Saleh Alhoumekani, a former officer in the Presidential Guard, accused Guelleh of ordering the killing of judge Borrel. He claimed to have overheard a conversation on October 19, 1995 between Guelleh and five men, one of whom said "mission accomplished! The nosy judge is dead!"

16. (SBU) After no new results for several years, Mrs. Borrel pushed the case to be transferred to a new judge, Jean-Baptist Parlos. Parlos ordered an exhumation and new autopsy of Borrel's body after a trip to Djibouti with three forensic experts in February 2002. This autopsy revealed the cause to be a "violent death due to external causes." Cranial trauma, a fracture of the left forearm and an alternation of burned areas of the body led experts to believe that Borrel was killed by a blow to the head before being burned. Based on the evidence from the new autopsy the prosecutor supports the medical experts' theory that it was a murder. In November 2003, the newest judge on the case requested declassification of ten documents held by the DGSE (French foreign intelligence agency) relating to the Borrel case. The ten documents were released March 27, 2004 causing a renewed media interest in the case.

17. (SBU) Comment: The Government's reaction to the French broadcast is strong and included ordering the French to stop work on disaster assistance in the aftermath of flooding in Djibouti. The government also launched a media campaign of its own in an attempt to cast doubt on the veracity of the French broadcast. Embassy will comment septel on implications for Djibouti-French relations and evaluate government of Djibouti accusation that France's actions at this time are linked to jealousy over U.S.-Djibouti relations. End Comment.  
RAGSDALE